

# Scholarly Promotion of School Counseling

## Scholarly Promotion of Professional School Counseling: School Counselors and the *Georgia School Counseling Association Journal*

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### School Counselors and the *Georgia School Counseling Association Journal*

School counseling is a relative newcomer in the landscape of helping professions. Although our profession has roots in Davis' 'guidance' curriculum introduced in the Grand Rapids, Michigan public school system's curriculum in 1907 and Parson's Vocational Bureau Movement of 1909, much has changed over the last 100 years. While at one time school counselor training consisted of two to five graduate classes, current professional school counseling standards, as outlined by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP), require a minimum of 48 hours leading to the Master's degree. CACREP also identifies eight core counselor preparation areas that include professional identity, social and cultural diversity, human growth and development, career development, helping relationships, group work, assessment, and research and evaluation (CACREP, 2001).

As a springboard from the professional preparation core offered by CACREP, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) has presented its National Model (ASCA, 2003) for practitioners to develop, implement, and evaluate school counseling programs. With the support of CACREP and ASCA initiatives, professional school counselors across the United States can receive direction on how to excel in the school counseling profession. In Georgia, however, new developments have underscored the need for professional school counselors to engage in an underutilized tool to promote the utility of school counseling: scholarly writing.

### School Counseling Issues in Georgia

On December 17, 2007, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GPSC) adopted a board rule,

which allows persons with a license in Clinical Social Work to receive certification as a school counselor, on a time-limited basis, as long as the certificant is accepted into an accredited school counseling program. Interestingly, in 2005 Georgia's Board of Regents (BOR), which governs the University System of Georgia colleges and universities, mandated that all system schools with school counseling programs must pursue and receive CACREP accreditation by 2008 or face possible sanctions or shutdown (*Regent's Principles, 2004*). The disconnection between the Commission's rules for school counselor certification and the Board of Regent's mandate for strict adherence to CACREP policies further belies the significance of many Georgia school districts' adoption of the ASCA National Model as the framework for their school counseling programs. These inconsistent developments intimate that efforts to standardize counselor preparation and service delivery may face greater challenges in the near future. School counselors have lobbied, petitioned and demanded intervention from state officials. What other steps can we take to protect the integrity of the school counseling profession? The purpose of this article is to reiterate to school counselors the importance of promoting our profession through scholarly research and publication.

### School Counseling Research and Outcomes

The school counseling profession is driven by theory based and research validated best practices that guide our interventions with stakeholders. Yet, the degree to which we utilize research and evaluation in the presentation of outcomes and accomplishments remains dependent upon a variety of factors. Bauman (2004) found that intrapersonal factors that influence school counselors' use of research and evaluation can include confidence in research ability, perceived relevance of research, and perceived value of research. Bauman also found that only

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36% percent of the school counselors reported reading the flagship journal of the American School Counseling Association entitled *Professional School Counseling*.

Moreover, systemic issues can also preclude scholarly inquiry into the effectiveness of counseling interventions, program outcomes, or evaluation. These can include building, district, or system policies that remain fixed in antiquated models of school counseling that emphasize administrative duties rather than comprehensive developmental school counseling. For example, districts may favorably evaluate the counselor on how often he or she interacts with students and disregard the counselor's efforts to develop interventions based on individual and system data.

## Publishing in the *Georgia School Counseling Journal*

Georgia school counselors can use the Georgia School Counseling Association and its *journal*, the *Georgia School Counseling Journal*, as a conduit to demonstrate how students have benefited from school counseling. For some of us, hearing the word research causes trepidation and for others, disinterest. Yet, research seeks to answer questions that we have about our work, our stakeholders, and how we can maintain our equilibrium while we develop new courses of action. To participate in the *Journal*, a author must possess some key skills in order to experience success.

First, the aurthor must be curious and develop questions about an intriguing aspect of their work. Most of us go through the day asking "why" or "how" – unwittingly taking the first steps of conducting research. Second, the writer must be willing to write these questions down and search articles found in databases such as GALILEO, Questia, ERIC, or other scholarly collections to see if others have asked the same questions, found the answers, and even added to the questions. If a writer has a Georgia library card, he or she has access to GALILEO. Complexity does not characterize excellent research but strong interest in the topic and familiarity with current work in the area lay a strong foundation.

Next, the writer must read articles and become familiar with technical writing as articulated by the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2001). Finally, the writer must not fear making mistakes because technical writing takes practice. One recently minted doctoral student described learning to write in APA style as learning to ride a bicycle – the smallest steps

indicate progress and life affords multiple opportunities to perfect one's form even after reaching mastery.

The *GSCA Journal* offers school counselors a wonderful opportunity to promote and sustain the profession in this era of educational reform. The submission process includes feedback from reviewers, and the editor. If the manuscript is written well, utilizes appropriate APA format, and most importantly addresses an issue relevant to the school counseling profession, there is a revision request contingent to publication or a major revision and a resubmission process, if the manuscript is relevant. There can be a rejection if the manuscript is better suited to another journal or does not connect to the school counseling profession, is written too poorly for a timely revision or does not adhere to APA format. This process is not adversarial but designed to facilitate the author's development of a quality article and the preparation of a *Journal* that highlights the profession's role in educating all children and demonstrates the utility of the profession. GSCA editorial review board members look forward to your submissions.

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